(b) Government, through diplomatic channels, have taken up the matter of their release and repatriation with Pakistan.

Extension of Tawaghat-Gunji road to facilitate Kailash Mansarovar pilgrims

†2458 SHRI HARISH RAWAT Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state

(a) whether there is any proposal to extend Tawaghat-Gunji road, presently under construction, upto Sialekh to facilitate the travel of Kailash Mansarovar pilgrims coming from various parts of the country and abroad,

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the steps Government are taking to make this path convenient on the lines of path available through China?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH) (a) Yes

(b) and (c) Government have undertaken the construction of a road linking Ghatiabgarh and the Lipulekh Pass, which includes the section from Tawaghat to Gunji The construction of the road has been presently held up due to environmental objections arising from its routing through the Asokote Wild Life Sanctuary The matter is pending with the Hon'ble Supreme Court

Power project in Bhutan

2459 SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI. Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state.

(a) whether it is a fact that a power project is to set up in Bhutan as part of Indo-Bhutan cooperation,

(b) if so, the details thereof,

(c) whether it is going to help India in any manner, and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH) (a) to (d) Hydro-power generation has been identified as one of the core areas of cooperation

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi

between India and Bhutan. It is an ongoing programme under which 336MW Chukha Hydroelectricity Project and 60MW Kurichu Project have been commissioned in 1988 and 2002 respectively. Currently 1020MW Tala Project is under implementation and is expected to be commissioned in the first quarter of 2006. The Projects are financed on a 60:40 grant : loan basis. The Detailed Project Report of 800+MW Punatsangchu Project is also being undertaken currently.

2. While these Projects generate substantial revenues for Royal Government of Bhutan, most of the electricity from the Projects is transmitted to energy deficient States in India at a mutually agreed tariff.

3. There are also long-term benefits that are intangible. As a consequence of our support to Bhutan's development programmes, the overall relations between India and Bhutan have matured over the years to become a model for mutually beneficial cooperation in the region, providing immense benefit to the peoples of both countries. The bilateral relationship between India and Bhutan is multifaceted and diverse, encompassing political, security, economic, cultural and social fields. The concerted efforts by the two countries continue to draw upon the complementarities and comparative advantages of the two economies, placing bilateral relations on firm footing.

Indians in Iraq after US invasion

†2460. SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indians who went to Iraq after US invasion there; and

(b) the measures taken by Government to protect Indians in Iraq?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) It is estimated that 6000 Indians went to Iraq since the US invasion.

(b) Government have taken following measures to protect Indians in Iraq:—

(i) The Government have reiterated its instructions to the Missions in the Gulf to extend all possible assistance to the Indian nationals in Iraq desiring to return to India.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.